

TDM Success Story:

Washington State Leads the Nation in Vanpooling

Vanpooling is a travel mode that brings five to fifteen commuters together in a public or privately-owned vehicle. Over 1,400 public vanpools serve Washington's commuters, and it is estimated that an additional 200 private vanpools operate in the Puget Sound region alone. Public vanpool programs provide insured vehicles, utilize commuter-drivers, and pay for fuel, oil, maintenance and repairs. Public vanpool fares are based on round-trip mileage. Supportive state legislation allows transit agencies and private individuals a break on the sales tax on vehicles used for vanpooling.

Background

A long history of vanpooling:

- ♦ Vanpooling started in the Puget Sound region in the late 1970s as a response to the energy crisis. Local companies such as the Boeing Company, Honeywell and Safeco Insurance began offering corporate vanpools even before public transit agencies initiated public vanpool service in 1979.

Washington leads the nation in vanpooling:

- ♦ Washington has the largest public vanpool fleet in North America. In fact, the six local operators in the Puget Sound region alone provide 40% of the public vanpools in the country.

Eleven transportation agencies offer vanpool service statewide, including:

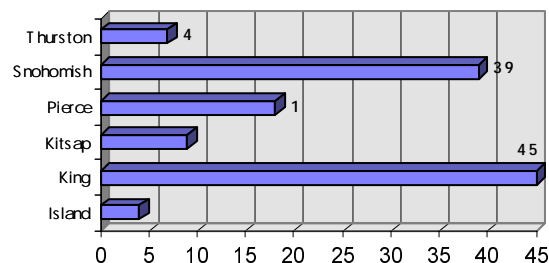
Ben Franklin Transit (Benton & Franklin Counties)
Community Transit (Snohomish County)
C-Trans (Clark County)
Intercity Transit (Thurston County)
Island Transit (Island County)
Jefferson Transit (Jefferson County)
King County Metro Transit (King County)
Kitsap Transit (Kitsap County)
Pierce Transit (Pierce County)
Spokane Transit (City of Spokane)
Whatcom County

Stats

Statewide:

- ♦ Some 1,250 public vanpools serve the populous Puget Sound region via six local transit agencies, and approximately 163 vanpools serve the less-populated counties in the state via five local transit agencies.
- ♦ King County Metro operates the largest public vanpool program in the country, with 700 vans, and Community Transit operates the third-largest program, with 239 vans. Washington's largest vanpool program outside the Puget Sound region is operated by Ben Franklin Transit, in Eastern Washington's tri-cities, with 104 vans.

Annual Puget Sound Region Vanpool Growth 1995 - 1999



Average region growth per year = 121

Total region growth for period = 484

Source: Puget Sound Regional Vanpool Market Study, June 2000.

Puget Sound Region:

- ♦ Vanpooling in the Puget Sound region has grown by 60% since 1995, achieving a 2% share of the commute market.

Puget Sound region, continued

- ♦ Vanpools traveling by ferry remove the equivalent of 2,312 single occupant vehicles (SOVs) each day from ferry sailings. Each day the ferry system would have to schedule 22 additional sailings of its largest boats to accommodate the vehicles that vanpoolers would otherwise drive on-board.
- ♦ Vanpools in the region reduce the mileage traveled by SOVs by 2.7 million miles annually. On a daily basis, this is equivalent to about one and a half hours of traffic on the Evergreen Point Floating Bridge, operating at capacity and in both directions.

Why is it successful?

Vanpooling continues to be a successful TDM strategy for Washington State, and in particular the populous Puget Sound region, for a variety of reasons.

Supportive policies and incentives:

- ♦ Statewide policies encourage both public and private vanpooling. Legislation established in 1979 offers all vanpool operators a sales tax incentive. And, 1997 legislation exempts employers from liability when employees are injured while participating in an employer-sponsored commute program. Also, the state provides public transit agencies with access to both long-term van leasing and short-term van rental programs.

Employer trip reduction programs:

- ♦ Statewide, from 1993 to 1999 vanpooling increased by 17% at work sites affected by the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Law.¹ This law requires employers in Washington's nine most populous counties to manage and promote transportation programs for their employees. In the Puget Sound region, 91% of the region's public vanpools commute to major employers involved in CTR programs.

Unique and growing markets for vanpooling:

- ♦ Statistics from the recent *Puget Sound Regional Vanpool Market Study* show that an increasing amount of commuting is occurring across county lines, and, commute trips are getting longer. Washington's vanpool programs are geared towards these unique commute markets.
- ♦ Surveys also suggest consumers' high and positive awareness of vanpooling, continuing growth and economic trends, and growing diversification of businesses are all contributing to continued growth of the vanpool markets in the populous Puget Sound region. In fact, the study suggests an upper-end potential market as high as 14 to 20 times greater for vanpooling in the region.

Vanpools on Washington State Ferries:

- ♦ Since 1991, the Washington State Ferries' Vanpool Program has also contributed to the phenomenal growth in vanpooling by offering convenience and cost savings on the most-congested ferry routes. Registered vanpools receive preferential boarding privileges at most docks and are exempted from paying the daily vehicle fares.

¹Washington State Department of Transportation, Transportation Demand Management Office. *CTR Task Force Report to the Washington Legislature*. December 1999. Web: wsdot.wa.gov/pubtran/ctr

Other information and statistics taken from Washington State Department of Transportation, Office of Urban Mobility, *Puget Sound Regional Vanpool Market Study Executive Report*. June 2000. Web: wsdot.wa.gov/mobility/tdm/tdmhome/html